United Nations A/C.3/61/2

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 October 2006
English
Original: Arabic

Sixty-first session
Third Committee
Agenda item 60
Social development

Letter dated 3 October 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of October 2006 and on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the Arab Strategy on the Family, which was adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States meeting at the summit level in Algiers on 23 March 2005 (see annex). I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly under agenda item 60.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group of Arab States

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Arab Strategy on the Family

The Summit-level Council of the League of Arab States,

Having considered

- The Arab Strategy on the Family, and
- Resolution 478 on the endorsement of the Arab Strategy on the Family, adopted on 5 December 2004 by the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs,

Believing in the importance of building a sound, secure, stable Arab family and making all preventive and curative health conditions available to ensure that all family members are in good health and able to enjoy their rights,

Aware that it is essential to build a family that is open to the age we live in and can benefit from and assimilate its scientific and technological achievements while simultaneously holding to positive Arab social and cultural values and participating positively in human culture and civilization,

Seeking to strengthen the position of the family and enhance its place among civil society institutions, and to promote the development of national policies to that end and to ensure the integration of the family and its participation in decision-making mechanisms,

In the framework of the tangible accomplishments of the Arab family health project,

Decides:

I

1. To approve the Arab Strategy on the Family, appended hereto, as an invaluable set of guidelines to family policy;

2. To invite Arab Member States to use the Strategy as a source of guidance in developing or reviewing their national strategies in the area of the family, having regard to duly ratified Arab and international Charters and laws and regulations in force in Member States;

3. To invite Joint Arab Action institutions to contribute to the work of realizing the objectives set forth in the Strategy;

II

To instruct the Secretariat to communicate the measures being taken in this connection by the competent authorities in Arab Member States.

(Summit resolution 17/318, adopted on 23 March 2005)

Annex

Arab Strategy on the Family

Preamble

In the light of the values and principles taught by the revealed religions, and in the light of the concepts of mutual love, respect and solidarity among individuals and among families down through successive generations,

Taking into account the characteristics of the Arab family, the constitution of which includes cultural elements that are prevalent in Arab societies,

Having regard to the actual situation of the Arab family, which specialized studies have shown is in need of support and assistance,

Aware of the importance of interaction with constant international and regional change in order to take advantage of what have been found to be its positive aspects and avoid its potentially undesirable negative aspects,

In pursuance of efforts aimed at providing the family with as much protection and support as possible, to enable it to fulfil its basic functions in maintaining the human race, playing its role in bringing up new generations and contributing to the progress of society,

Consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the Declaration adopted at the World Conference on Women, the provisions of the Pact of the League of Arab States, the Arab Statement on Family Rights, the Social Action Charter and Strategy of the Arab States, the Arab Plan of Action for the Ageing, the Arab Strategy for the Advancement of Women, the Arab Youth Policy Paper, the Second Arab Plan of Action on Childhood, and the bases and principles set forth in those documents for the strengthening of a family life of dignity,

Believing that the task of bettering the situation of the Arab family requires the adoption of an Arab position officially committing Governments to an affirmation of the family's position in society, the strengthening of the bonds between family members and between generations, the improvement of families' living conditions, and the development of legislation and other statutory instruments aimed at supporting and protecting the family,

Pursuant to the resolution adopted at the Doha Conference in January 2003 on the development of an Arab strategy on the family, the crystallization of the framework of that commitment, and the definition of areas of action in response to present and prospective challenges, Member States and civil society organizations agree to take appropriate measures during the period 2004-2014.

Main challenges

Reports and information contained in studies relating to the family have unanimously agreed that the Arab family has been and continues to be exposed to a number of factors and changes that have affected its composition, structure, functions and roles, its stability, its value system, modes of behaviour and lifestyles, with a resultant impact on relations between family members and between generations. Despite the achievements that have been realized as a result of the

application of relatively successful programmes under governmental auspices, especially in the areas of education, health care, and training and skills development for young people that have enabled them to find jobs and found families of their own, the emergence of women into the job market, and the enactment of legislation regulating family formation and relations within the family, the Arab family continues to face substantial challenges. Some of the most noteworthy of those challenges are:

- The widening knowledge and technology gap between nations and peoples as a result of the rapid rate of technological development, the knowledge revolution, and scientific progress and its applications;
- Political change and economic globalization, which have imposed harsh measures upon developing States, including Arab States, with the result that Government spending has been cut back and the role of the State in the social sphere has been reduced;
- The appearance of factors of social instability as a result of negative repercussions on most sensitive social issues, such as employment and education, with resultant growth in unemployment, the exclusion of broad categories of citizens from social protection, the education situation and the growing problem of illiteracy, the dropout phenomenon, child labour, the declining standard of living of the middle class, and the spreading phenomena of drug use, addiction and violence, all of which are factors that jeopardize social stability and progress;
- The absence of democracy at the political level, the appropriation of decision-making, the retreat of the movement of construction and development, the spread of unemployment, rising poverty and crime rates, and the impact of all the above on the family;
- Developmental policies that are deficient as regards the human aspect, and the fact that social development operations and their local programmes are bound up with the priorities and objectives of donor institutions, have led to neglect of the fundamental needs of families and receding human development levels;
- Social values, and consequently family values, that are shifting toward individualism, materialism and consumerist tendencies, weakening family relations, impacting the values of solidarity and cooperation within families, and contributing to the appearance of new patterns of deviant, anti-social behaviour among family members;
- Weakening and deterioration of family relations as a result of the narrowing of opportunities for daily interaction among family members, with the appearance of symbolic and material forms of violence between them and the growing phenomenon of divorce, with its inevitable impacts on generations within the family and children in particular;
- The growing tendency for young people to go abroad to study or work, which has led to the advent of far-reaching transformations in population characteristics, with attendant impacts on the demographic situation, such as later marriage, permanent celibacy and rising dependency ratios, thereby aggravating the social situation of the family and jeopardizing its stability. In addition, the growing phenomenon of absent fathers, who have gone to work

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abroad, has contributed to the instability of families and the appearance of juvenile delinquency;

- The growing tendency for entire families to emigrate to countries in which they do not enjoy the rights of citizens and are at risk of discrimination and marginalization and have difficulty integrating, while at the same time losing their natural ties and rights in their countries of origin;

- The growing phenomenon of women heads of families as a result of widowhood, family disintegration, divorce, death or other reasons, and this is placing added burdens upon them as mothers, especially in the absence of institutional mechanisms and programmes designed to assist them;

- The moral dangers threatening families as a result of the media, which broadcast programmes containing scenes of violence and delinquency, conceal facts and present misleading information for political or other ends;

- The scarcity of scientific information, reports, research and studies on the situation of the family, which has meant that there have been few credible authoritative sources on which to rely for the formulation of social policies for the benefit of families or the development of integrated family policies;

- The appearance of factors of political instability and deteriorating security conditions because of the increase in cases of violence and terrorism that some Arab countries have experienced;

- The impact on the Arab world of the occupation of Palestine and Iraq, with resultant growing human and economic losses and deteriorating security and social situations, which have led to a focus on efforts to resist these occupations, at the expense of efforts to address development problems;

- The spreading phenomenon of terrorism, which deprives families of their fathers and sons, whether killers or killed, victims or perpetrators, with the resultant loss to families of their material and moral potential, leading to their disintegration, the loss of their natural status as a healthy environment for the inculcation of elevated values and principles and appropriate behaviour, and the disappearance of their contribution to the establishment of a stable, secure society.

The road ahead

To enable the Arab family to become:

- A stable, secure family whose members enjoy all their rights, with their lives governed by democracy and relations among them characterized by dialogue, leading to their internalization of the concepts of human rights, participation, non-discrimination, constructive continuity between generations, and an ongoing endeavour to strengthen the principles of solidarity, mutual support, justice and equality;

- A family that is active in the organization of society, able to develop its functions positively, interacting with the changes of the contemporary age and the positive achievements of globalization, including scientific and other knowledge, and integrating with other institutions in the development and advancement of society, while retaining human, religious and national values and remaining within the limits of the teachings of the true Islamic religion;

- An Arab family that is receptive to various human civilizations and cultures, intercommunicating with others in a constructive interaction process that contributes to human culture and civilization on a basis of equality and mutual respect to achieve a more secure future for humanity, one that is free of armed conflicts and wars and in which justice and peace prevail;

- An Arab family that brings up its children to respect human rights and democracy, fundamental freedoms, the growth of mutual understanding, tolerance, honesty, spiritual and social values, respect for the law, and respect for the revealed religions, and endeavours to strengthen the principles of solidarity and mutual support among them and with other families, consistently with the Arab identity;

- A family that respects the elderly and seeks to provide them with care, with the assistance and support of appropriate legislation making provision for health care for persons in that category.

Basic premises

1. The family is a guiding instrument for social policies focusing on main general objectives and essential issues, based on an interpretation of the situation and the identification of its weaknesses and strengths without plunging into matters of detail, and containing general plans for measures designed to attain the ends in view;

2. The family is a natural entity comprising its members and providing the setting for the details of their lives, a natural community supporting intercommunication among its members in a context of religious and cultural values, and a social institution endeavouring to achieve material and moral security for its members, and hence stability for society as a whole;

3. Recognition of the fact that there are a number of types of Arab family, differing widely in their situations and characteristics as regards size, quality of life, priorities and needs, and also widely disparate with respect to the extent to which they have evolved and their relations with civil society organizations;

4. Commitment to the principles and objectives set forth in the Pact of the League of Arab States and the socio-economic, educational and cultural strategies expressed in specialized Arab plans of action and statements, and in particular those relating to the family, women, children and young people;

5. Affirmation of the contents of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and international and Arab Charters, strategies, conventions and other instruments relating to the institution of the family, and ongoing adjustment of their provisions in the light of practical outcomes;

6. Use of a diverse array of measures, programmes, activities and modes of intervention through agencies and institutions with a mandate to address issues and problems affecting the family.

Principles

1. The family is the basic unit in the foundation of society and is responsible for the functions of producing children, caring for them, and seeing to

their emotional, social and political development. It is a social institution, corporate in nature, with full juridical personality, and it serves to deepen a sense of belonging, inculcate values and stability, instil knowledge, and provide an example of ethical behaviour based on religion and citizenship.

2. Documented marriage is the starting-point for the foundation of a natural family in a context of a union between the sexes in accordance with religious and civil law.

3. The family is a basic cell that provides a setting for concord and relations of mutual affection and respect among its members.

4. The members of a family share a common life and destiny. It is their duty to contribute together to build a better life based on the values of mutual affection, love, respect and cooperation, with individual responsibility, freedom of choice, dialogue and intercommunication both within the family and outside it.

5. The family is the nucleus of society and the natural framework that is most worthy of support, that it may be able to provide the care that is due its children, interact with the changes occurring in the contemporary world, and fulfil its roles and functions in various social contexts.

6. The State is responsible for preparing appropriate circumstances for keeping the Arab family sound, ensuring its cohesiveness, empowering it and protecting its values, thereby strengthening its culture and identity and the identity of its children and enhancing the value of knowledge and work, while also providing it with legislative and socio-economic guarantees and making employment opportunities, social security and basic services available to it.

7. The State is responsible for protecting the family from violence and disintegration, in accordance with the provisions of its constitution and laws, and for providing educational opportunity, employment and social security to ensure its safety and well-being and enable it to lead a life of dignity. The provision of employment opportunities is an essential function that is fulfilled through the cooperation of all stakeholders at all levels, including families in the local community, government agencies, educational institutions, civil society institutions, the media and the private sector.

8. Empowerment of the family and strengthening of its capacities are a fundamental precondition for its fulfilment of its evolving functions and its contribution to the implementation of plans for the development and advancement of society and the development of its human resources, within the various social strata and geographic regions to which they belong.

9. It is essential to maintain the foundations of the Arab family, which has helped to preserve the values, principles and culture that have protected successive generations and kept them from falling into delinquency, and to endeavour by all available means to eliminate fear of the collapse and breakdown of the family.

Objectives and action

I. To build a sound, balanced, secure, stable family that is committed to the conditions of preventive and curative health from its inception to guarantee the health of its children, seeks to ensure that its members enjoy all their rights, and in which relations of trust, love and respect prevail.

Measures to that end

At Government level:

1. Regulation of marriage, its conditions, and the responsibilities arising from it; definition of relations between spouses and children and the rights and duties of all in the light of Islamic law; enactment of legislation stipulating health conditions required of persons wishing to marry and requiring them to obtain certificates attesting that they are free of hereditary diseases or disorders likely to cause deformities or handicaps in their children;

2. Institution of family courts and establishment of local units or offices to provide family guidance; reintroduction of the concept of the family council to deal with marital and family disputes and problems involving children and contain their negative repercussions;

3. Introduction of implementing regulations to bring into force laws relating to child support in the event of divorce, or in the event of the neglect of children, physical or moral violence against them, or their mistreatment at school or in society;

4. Adoption of the necessary policies and measures to provide reproductive health, child health and adolescent health services and services for women of childbearing age, in order to ensure safe maternity and healthy children, and to guarantee access to preventive and curative health services, including examinations for early detection of contagious diseases and hereditary disorders;

5. Development of preventive strategies to eliminate factors tending to result in the birth of disabled children, and other strategies for the care of disabled persons, making optimal provision for meeting their health-related, intellectual and psychological needs and integrating them into society, either through their families or through specialized institutions;

6. Measures designed to make children born in lawful wedlock to a father of alien nationality eligible for their mother's citizenship as well as that of their father, in order to strengthen their attachment to the societies in which they live and enable them to secure the education and basic care necessary for their growth and stability;

7. Commitment by Governments to the principle of partnership with community associations, civil society institutions and academic specialists to discuss family issues and develop plans for the advancement of the family, with periodic assessment of progress or obstacles;

8. Preparation of an awareness enhancement plan, with implementation of its various tasks to be distributed among governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and the various media, aimed at instilling awareness of the responsibilities arising from marriage and the founding of a family. The plan should encompass all the media and all levels, with civil society organizations and government bodies cooperating and sharing funding costs;

9. Production by the media of scientific awareness programmes, entertainment programmes and educational programmes as a means of strengthening ethical and family values. In that connection, two-way communication between Ministries of Culture and Information and Ministries of Social Affairs at the national and regional level will be vitally important to the task of generating information

flows that will enable planners to design programs for children and family audiences containing scientific information of the first order while also holding the attention of listeners and viewers;

10. Encouragement for the production of television programmes and serials that contribute to the building of sound, balanced families, support the values of enlightenment, participation and freedom of choice, and seek to promote the abandonment of medically and socially harmful practices that tend to turn families into permanent sources of conflict and breakdown.

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Organization of popular awareness campaigns that will give rise to non-traditional programmes aimed at:

(a) Promoting awareness of practices conducive to safe maternity and responsible paternity, ensuring that children receive basic care, equality between boys and girls, and information about rational spending in order to control the family's consumption behaviour;

(b) Conveying the importance of mutual affectionate concern and dialogue between spouses and other family members, and offering advice on overcoming problems and protecting the family from disintegration and collapse;

(c) Instilling a culture of health, environmental awareness and the prevention of deadly diseases such as AIDS and infectious hepatitis, especially among young people;

2. Encouragement for the establishment of family consultation offices that will help prevent problems from arising or becoming unmanageable for spouses or children;

3. Establishment of specialized institutions to care for and rehabilitate victims of domestic violence, and to organize awareness campaigns and programmes to combat such violence and condemn its perpetrators;

4. Preparation of informational materials addressing family problems such as delaying the age of marriage or refraining from marriage and the dangers associated with harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage, as well as problems of family spending and budgeting, and the organization of programmes and activities to be implemented through partnership between governmental and non-governmental institutions to address these problems;

5. Organization of informational dialogues between women and men on family-related issues and problems with a view to offering solutions and bringing together points of view on issues arising in the course of family disputes and quarrels, with special emphasis on shared family decision-making and shared responsibility for child-rearing and support for the values of partnership, democratic dialogue and non-discrimination;

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Preparation of a model legislative guide on the family, regulating marriage and defining relations between spouses and children and setting forth the rights and duties of all in the family setting, with a view to responding to contemporary developments;

2. Activation of the role of non-governmental associations and organizations in the area of the establishment of marriage funds, and action to encourage their institution in Arab States in an effort to enable them to play an important role in assisting low-income groups or groups with special needs, as a practical expression of social solidarity and mutual support;

3. Research on various forms of social controls in dealing with deviant behaviour such as narcotics use, extremism, illicit sexual relations and the like, and on the identification of appropriate means of rehabilitation and social conditioning designed to avoid and deal with these deviant forms of behaviour;

4. Financial and technical support from regional and international organizations and funds for private institutions and associations that are concerned with the victims of domestic violence, including medical, psychological and legal aspects;

5. Organization of or participation in regional and international meetings convened to consider the concerns and problems of the Arab family, with exchanges of views, experience and expertise on issues with global resonance.

II. Action to enable the family to perform its basic functions

Measures to combat poverty, improve families' quality of life and enable them to develop their capacities with a view to helping them continue steadfastly to reform their basic functions, contribute more effectively to social action and the reinforcement of social stability.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Adoption of policies designed to incorporate the human, social and health dimensions into the development process;

2. Enactment, amendment or development of Arab legislation relating to the insurance and pension system, and adoption of financial policies aimed at reducing disparities between socio-economic groups and helping marginalized and low-income groups to raise their standards of living;

3. Amend Arab legislation with a view to the empowerment of women in society;

4. Organization of national anti-poverty programmes and poverty mitigation programmes aimed at various social groups, including low-income groups, at all socio-economic and health status levels;

5. Amendments to investment legislation in Arab States to bring it into line with the situation of the Arab family;

6. Support for various productive enterprises and encouragement for private-sector institutions that establish or foster small family-run industries, especially in economically disadvantaged regions in urban areas, rural areas and semi-desert areas;

7. Adoption of a law on small business enterprises in urban areas, rural areas and semi-desert areas with a view to strengthening the empowerment of the family and women in the sustainable development process;

8. Organization of grants, loans and credit facilities under easy conditions, with government guarantees and offered on a preferential basis, for men and women responsible for supporting families in economically disadvantaged rural or remote areas;

9. Development of plans and programmes aimed at strengthening human capacity building and the care of persons with special needs;

10. Development of official and private technical and vocational training centres with high performance quality standards to deliver training courses aimed at teaching skills to and upgrading the capacities of heads of families of both sexes with a view to enhancing their self-reliance; linkage of vocational training programmes with current and anticipated long-term job market needs; and constant renewal and upgrading of those programmes;

11. Establishment of special mechanisms working in cooperation with government agencies or civil society institutions to market the products of families working in the informal sector, to enable them to continue producing and marketing those products;

12. Provision of quality education for all, backed by legislation making it compulsory and free, and development of programmes to eliminate barriers to the attainment of those objectives;

13. Action by Governments to expedite the fulfilment of their commitments to promote literacy among all social groups of both sexes and reduce the incidence of illiteracy until it is completely eliminated; action to address the dropout phenomenon and gender disparity in school attendance at the primary level; action to encourage pupils to complete their education;

14. Recognition of the need to create a mechanism aimed at impelling governments to enact and enforce legislation making it compulsory for heads of low-income and rural families to send their school-age children of both sexes to school, and not to send them out to work before they have completed their primary education, with incentives designed to facilitate compliance by such families;

15. Preparation of a plan to develop integrated health services, including preventive medicine, family planning, child care, primary health care and school medicine services, and action to make them available in all regions, especially in economically disadvantaged, rural and remote areas;

16. Expanded availability of day care centres and kindergartens in residential and commercial districts in which large numbers of mothers work with a view to giving them opportunities to engage in gainful employment and achieve promotion, such day care centres and kindergartens to be provided by social security institutions, local authorities or private business enterprises, and all parties concerned to contribute to the cost of operating them;

17. Publication of periodic statistical reports on the prevalence of poverty, based on internationally used indicators and criteria, and the use of those reports to develop national plans to reduce income disparities and differences in economic circumstances between families and address the structural factors giving rise to poverty in general;

18. Adoption of policies and measures aimed at preventing malnutrition and anaemia;

19. Action to enforce legislation relating to the rights and care of the elderly;

20. Development of conditions governing the fitness of housing for human habitation, with regulations prohibiting the location of industrial facilities alongside residential housing units;

21. Provision of recreational areas and public spaces for the benefit of families and individuals.

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Fresh thinking about means of investment, and action to inform families about new areas of income-generating activities, productive skills acquisition, technical advice and self-reliance in establishing independent business enterprises;

2. Development of programmes on intra-family dialogue between spouses and between parents and children;

3. Dispatch of work teams to contribute to the task of teaching heads of families, and especially women heads of families, how to establish, follow up and run small business enterprises, and to teach them about the best ways of developing such enterprises;

4. Organization of workshops and training courses in local communities in rural and semi-desert regions to enhance families' awareness of the importance of educating their daughters and the positive implications of education for the girls involved, their families and their future lives;

5. Participation in the work of establishing networks of community associations and organizations concerned with family matters and action to coordinate their efforts, and ongoing communication with families receiving their services to evaluate the programmes and projects delivered by the community sector;

6. Conclusion of partnership agreements among governmental and non-governmental institutions to distribute the tasks of providing integrated community and health services for poor or migrant families;

7. Organization of discussion groups, with governmental and non-governmental organizations participating, on plans and programmes relating to the highest-priority basic needs of local community residents, and establishment of local committees to ensure that those programmes are launched, evaluate them, follow up their achievements and ensure that they continue;

8. Development of programmes designed to enhance families' awareness of the importance of rational consumption and to develop the values of saving as an essential aspect of the family economy;

9. Organization of periodic meetings attended by various persons active in these associations and organizations with a view to comparing experience and exchanging expertise in all areas of common activity.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Encouragement for exchanges of expertise and pioneering experimental initiatives between Arab States with a view to their mutual advantage, especially efforts aimed at expanding social security and social insurance networks, establishing development funds, organizing training and skills development programmes, launching family businesses and the like;

2. Holding of inter-Arab conferences to consider issues and problems affecting the family, organization of training courses to exchange experience in the fields of new job creation programmes and projects for families and family income enhancement, provide training in social programme and project design, budget preparation, funding flows and the like;

3. Organization of workshops for exchanges of expertise and evaluation of inter-Arab educational experiences with a view to preparing up-to-date programmes focusing on self-learning and continuing education methods to ensure ongoing post-graduation development of the capacities of family members and children, in the light of scientific and technological progress and in response to job market needs;

4. Execution of the Arab Informal Education Project for those who are interested, in order to provide family members with an opportunity of upgrading their academic qualifications through correspondence or Open University studies, thereby enabling them to improve their situations.

III Building a family that is receptive to the contemporary age with a view to achieving comprehensive, sustainable development in the light of scientific achievements and technological innovations and enabling families to put down positive value-related, cultural and socio-economic roots and contribute positively to human culture and civilization.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Adoption of integrated family policies within a comprehensive outlook designed to address issues relating to family development and skills acquisition in various fields, featuring the observation approach in research on the situation of the family;

2. Application of active teaching methods aimed at accustoming children to sound, critical scientific thinking and bringing out their creative abilities in various situations both within the family and outside it;

3. Reviewing teaching and instruction curricula with a view to the incorporation into them of thinking that evokes new scientific values consistent with the religion of the community, the Constitution of the State and sound traditions, technological innovations, the development of methods of discussion and dialogue, acceptance of others' views, and propagation of these concepts through the media;

4. Commissioning of research on changes in the prevailing value systems with a view to crystallizing value-related and intellectual orientations that enable individuals to benefit from positive contemporary innovations;

5. Support for the family's role in self-teaching and provision of the materials needed for its effective exercise; facilitation of the task of applying its

approaches and methods to enable both the family as a whole and its individual members to renew their knowledge and skills and develop their capacities, thereby acquiring the ability to deal with the innovations of the contemporary age and globalization;

6. Action to enhance families' awareness of means and mechanisms for inculcating in their members democratic values and participation in the management of social institutions in general and the family in particular; introduction of those values and their exercise in the school environment, and action to incorporate them into regular education programmes;

7. Formulation of an information strategy on family issues, and production and dissemination of information messages designed to buttress civilized family values on the one hand, and the values of science, knowledge and dialogue on the other hand;

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Encouragement for families and training for family members in participation and successful intercommunication, with each of them contributing his or her view in reaching decisions with a bearing on the life and interests of the family;

2. Cooperation with the media in disseminating a culture of freedom of opinion and the right for individuals to be different;

3. Organization of training workshops on new role distribution patterns in the light of the employment of mothers and children;

4. Organization of conferences and symposia attended by Arab non-governmental organizations and associations and organizations and associations in States of residence to discuss issues of relevance for the émigré Arab family, with exchanges of experience and expertise on the identification of appropriate solutions for the protection of Arab families at risk of disintegration because of socio-economic and political changes occurring in Arab societies; the aim of these forums will be to provide expanded opportunities for intercommunication, discussion and exchanges of information, experience and opinions between émigré families living abroad, in their States of residence or elsewhere, in an effort to explore shared issues and concerns, common values, and a common interest in avoiding conflict, striving for mutual understanding and propagating an atmosphere of peace.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Sociological field studies in Arab States on the situation and functions of the Arab family in the presence of the changes occurring in social values and prevalent behaviour in the family and attitudes to family issues, and identification of the values underpinning the contemporary Arab family, with a view to attaining optimal means and mechanisms for strengthening and reaffirming positive values;

2. Organization of conferences to propagate a family culture that affirms the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunity, respect for differing views, and adoption of the principle of democracy and integration of that concept into the life of society and within the family;

I. Action to expand opportunities for cooperation between the Arab family and the international family, so that both can benefit from the experience of others, in line with the religious and social Arab family values.

IV. Action to enhance the status of the Arab family, improve its position among social institutions and in its immediate environment, and develop national policies for development and integration of the family and ensure its participation in decision-making mechanisms.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Incorporation of family development, family empowerment, family self-reliance and family self-management programmes into development plans, and provision of the necessary financial resources for implementation, follow-up and evaluation of those programmes;

2. Establishment of national High Councils or Commissions on the family, with their membership to include representatives of specialized ministries, non-governmental organizations, universities and social research centres, to coordinate efforts aimed at developing recommendations on national family policies, prepare plans and projects, monitor their implementation and evaluate their outcomes;

3. Establishment or development of national mechanisms to enforce the provisions of Arab and international instruments enshrining various rights of families;

4. Encouragement for the integration of women into development activities through the use of employment policies that take women's family responsibilities and childbearing functions into account;

5. Encouragement for voluntary work and expansion of the scope of such work beyond traditional charitable endeavours into developmental activities that provide a return for families, and action to facilitate the formation of community associations and organizations that support family development and help families perform their functions efficiently.

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Organization of seminars and discussion groups on families' connections with contemporary issues and human and social development issues, enlisting the help of the various media to broadcast these awareness-enhancing activities on a wide scale;

2. Execution of projects designed to meet the varied needs of families and to establish links of intercommunication and cooperation between families and various social institutions;

3. Action to provide more opportunities for young people to participate in voluntary social work as a means of training them to engage in dialogue, assume responsibility, and communicate with persons belonging to various age groups and educational and social levels;

4. Construction of social communication networks between regions and districts and exchanges of services among them as a means of strengthening their social feeling and deepen their citizenship awareness;

5. Organization of occasions for stimulating discussion in residential districts about public issues and questions relating to the facilities, programmes and services needed by families;

6. Organization of workshops designed to make young people and children aware of the concept of sustainable development and the importance of environmental preservation in order to ensure that the needs of future generations can be met;

7. Organization of workshops and films designed to train families in methods of constructive action to guide their children in choosing wisely among what they see on television or on the Internet, and in the development of their critical standards in response to programmes and films that glorify crime, violence and corruption.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Support for inter-Arab cooperation in developing plans, programmes and projects aimed at development of the family and the human capacities of family members, and stimulation of community participation in development and decision-making;

2. Convening of specialized round tables to consider contemporary changes and their impact on the Arab family and discuss the best ways of taking advantage of their positive aspects while avoiding their negative aspects in terms of their impacts on the being and function of the family and society.

V. Establishment of an up-to-date database on the situation and characteristics of the Arab family, and creation of an Internet site for the benefit of scientific investigators, persons interested in family issues and decision-makers.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Establishment of national databases on the socio-economic, health-related, educational and cultural situation of the family as the foundation-stone for the preparation of national social development policies;

2. Preparation of an inventory of governmental institutions, community associations and offices of regional and international bodies that are active in providing family care, protection and development services, and action to evaluate their situations, activities and programmes;

3. Signing of cooperation agreements between national Councils or Commissions on the family and universities and specialized research centres in each State with a view to directing the attention of students and investigators to the need for research on various aspects of the family and family-related issues;

4. Preparation of a bibliographic index of research and special studies on the family consisting of doctoral dissertations submitted at various Arab universities, to form the nucleus and initial collection of an Arab library of family studies;

5. Commissioning of critical studies on national legislation relating to family issues as a means of identifying gaps and shortcomings in that area with a

view to taking corrective action, thereby enhancing families' effectiveness in performing their functions and playing their social roles;

6. Development of the expertise and skills of those working in the various fields of social investigation and action relating to family issues, through appropriate theoretical, practical and technical preparation.

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Compilation of data and conduct of research on matters of priority concern for the Arab family (relations, roles and functions), and also on related social phenomena such as juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and the phenomenon of violence, which is becoming widespread in some family environments, including research on types of violence and the harm resulting from it;

2. Establishment of national monitoring agencies to track changes confronting the family, the effects of change on families' situations, characteristics and functions, and various social issues and phenomena, with the resulting data to be used as the basic source of information for publication of an annual report on the situation of the family and as a means of assisting national Commissions on the family in developing their programmes and projects.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Development of uniform rules, at the level of the League of Arab States, for the compilation of data, statistics and indicators for measuring family-related phenomena and characteristics that are suitable for purposes of Arab and international comparisons;

2. More active cooperation between Arab States in the field of comparative sociological and family studies, with the development of uniform terminology as a means of facilitating joint field studies, exchanging data and analysing and addressing problems;

3. Encouragement for Arab States to conduct field studies and research on social phenomena that are prevalent in some Arab societies, and allocation of the necessary financial resources for that purpose.

VI. Action to strengthen connections with émigré Arab families, support them and protect their rights, with a view to building confidence, renewing links and exchanging benefits between those families and their countries of origin.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Enactment of legislation to protect the property and rights of émigré families and persons working abroad and support their sense of belonging to their countries;

2. Research on the family emigration phenomenon and identification of its causes and motivation and its impacts on national economies on the one hand, and on the life of the families concerned themselves on the other hand;

3. Conclusion of cooperation agreements between émigré supplying and receiving countries, whether Arab or non-Arab, to establish organized rules for

dealing with family issues and the rights of family members in the event of disputes between or separation of the spouses, to preserve the interests of the children;

4. Streamlining of residency permit and work authorization issuance procedures for émigré men who marry women with nationality of the host country, to make it easier for them to support their families;

5. A positive view of mixed marriage as an experiment deserving of protection and support because of its contribution to the enrichment and diversification of bonds between peoples, especially where there are no essential countervailing factors;

6. Action to facilitate necessary family reunification measures for persons working in Arab countries, and action to enable them to benefit from social services for workers and guarantee their right to education and their right to enrol their children in educational institutions at all levels;

7. Official invitations to prominent Arab émigrés to visit their countries of origin for purposes of intercommunication and exchanges of views on matters relating to the welfare of émigrés and the interests of their countries, especially as regards enhanced investment opportunities in those countries;

8. Adoption by Arab Governments of positive positions in support of the rights and interests of Arab émigré communities in various countries, especially in view of the fact that in some instances they may face dangers and hardship;

9. Broadcasting of television programmes featuring direct communication and conversation between émigré families and their relatives in their countries of origin, to enable them to exchange views on issues of common interest.

At the level of non-governmental organizations:

1. Establishment of associations mandated to reinforce material, moral and social links with émigré families, protect their rights, and organize travel and visits to their countries of origin on special occasions or on a regular basis, and meetings with their relatives or family members who have not emigrated to enable them to exchange views, thoughts and positions on issues relating to emigration and other matters;

2. Convening of a conference to enhance popular awareness of the positive and negative impacts of emigration on the national economy and on the identity and development of Arab societies, and to identify problems arising from mixed marriage and develop solutions;

3. Action to create or preserve and foster information programmes that strengthen the family, social and cultural links of émigrés with their countries of origin.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Development of state-of-the-art programmes designed to teach the Arabic language to the children of émigré families, in cooperation with the Arab Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ALECSO), in order to build and activate tools of communication and interaction with Arab émigré communities abroad and enable them to be aware on an ongoing basis of the affairs of their countries of origin;

2. Preparation of programmes and files on the lives of prominent Arab émigré families, describing their accomplishments and the difficulties and challenges that confronted them in their work and family lives as they worked their way up to their present eminent positions;

3. Action to expand the resources of the Arab Emigration Monitoring Organization to enable it to track the situations of Arab émigré families, especially as they are affected by cultural, social, economic and political issues in their countries of residence.

VII. Help for Arab families that are enduring hardship because of natural disasters and famines and action to ease the suffering of those afflicted by war, occupation and armed conflict, by providing them with emergency assistance.

Measures to that end:

At Government level:

1. Preparation of relief plans to deal with hardship arising from natural disasters and the effects of war, occupation and armed conflict, such plans to include specific measures to be taken by Governments to avoid human losses, minimize and limit material damage, and mitigate the impacts arising from these situations;

2. Development of preparedness programmes for the provision of relief and assistance to afflicted families to enable them to recover their balance and rebuild their lives;

3. Identification of the capacities at the disposal of local communities, especially communities affected by disasters of the kinds referred to above, that can be harnessed for relief and salvage operations, and training programmes for the members of such communities to teach them how to respond appropriately in emergency situations;

4. Vigilance in case of breaches of international custom, conventions and treaties, and dissemination of information relating to material, moral and psychological casualties and damage and instances of intimidation and rape occurring during wars, armed conflicts and alien occupation; action to raise these issues in international forums and endeavour to ensure that the perpetrators are punished;

5. Organization of awareness campaigns in the various media, focusing on human rights issues as they relate to resistance to occupation and self-defence, practice in methods of conflict resolution, the enforcement of international law based on the principles of the United Nations, and means of referral to international organizations in the event of violations.

At the level of non-governmental organizations and the private sector:

1. Preparation of plans for the enlistment of volunteers and training courses to prepare them to help with rescue and relief operations, and action to collect contributions and assistance for the benefit of afflicted families;

2. Action to mobilize public opinion and enhance people's awareness of the importance of human solidarity and mutual assistance within the community in dealing with the hardship faced by large numbers of families as a result of disasters of these kinds;

3. Development of innovative, non-traditional programmes and activities aimed at making services available to disadvantaged and marginalized social groups and helping the members of such groups to develop their capacities with a view to enabling them to improve their own situations and living conditions and meet their own basic needs;

4. Organization of training and awareness workshops on appropriate behaviour and relief actions during disasters and crises or situations of economic hardship, with a view to providing heads of families with the skills they need to respond quickly and effectively to contain problems arising from such crises, instead of reacting with resignation and waiting for assistance;

5. Organization of conferences on the hideous consequences left behind by war and armed conflict, action to avoid them from a human standpoint, and condemnation of those who commit aggression against peoples of the world in various international forums;

6. Organization of awareness campaigns to disseminate a culture of peace based on law, justice, and an understanding of the essential distinction between legitimate resistance to alien occupation and illegitimate acts of terrorism and intimidation;

7. Delivery of programmes for the rehabilitation of groups that have suffered economic, social and psychological damage as a result of war and armed conflict, and action to reintegrate them into their communities;

8. Training for volunteers, both male and female, aimed at enabling them to conduct relief and assistance operations and provide first aid and primary medical and psychological care for persons who have suffered or been injured as a result of war.

At the inter-Arab level:

1. Action by Arab, regional and international organizations to make material and technical assistance available to private bodies and institutions that provide families with support and aid in times of hardship;

2. Action to develop the capacities of support, relief, first aid and civil defence agencies and institutions in Member States, and action to support their resources and expertise, enable them to develop and execute rapid intervention programmes and enhance their performance in confronting natural disasters and hazards;

3. Establishment of mechanisms for rapid intervention in disaster situations, and action to enable them intervene positively and effectively to relieve families facing hardship as a result of such situations;

4. Commissioning of studies and research on the suffering of families and family members as a result of military operations and the accompanying practices, especially the inhumane practices of the Zionist occupation in Palestine, the hideous apartheid wall and its destructive impact on the Palestinian family, and widespread dissemination of the findings;

5. Formulation of a demand for United Nations supervision of relief and rescue operations for families afflicted by alien occupation, and proposals for appropriate programmes and mechanisms for their protection;

6. Establishment of institutions mandated to address issues relating to women, families and children in Arab States by adopting, in the legal and social frameworks of those States, draft public policy guidelines for the enactment of legislation in line with Arab and international instruments dealing with the family.

Financial arrangements

In order to implement the Arab Strategy on the Family, Governments, in cooperation with regional and international organizations, donor institutions and funding agencies, shall be required to adopt the financial arrangements outlined below, in so far as they are not incompatible with State policy:

(a) Adoption of a policy to provide funding and allocate the necessary resources to empower the Arab family and ensure its welfare within the budgets of development plans;

(b) Allocation of the necessary sums in official budgets for the establishment of mechanisms mandated to address family issues and the implementation of plans and programmes set forth in the Strategy;

(c) Provision of material support for non-governmental organizations, especially grassroots organizations that are active in rural areas and low-income districts in cities, and participation by those organizations and financial institutions on a priority basis in programme delivery;

(d) Action to facilitate administrative measures, including exemption from taxes and customs duty, to provide the equipment and supplies needed by non-profit non-governmental organizations, especially equipment and supplies intended for use in small family-run enterprises of various kinds;

(e) Funding for small income-generating businesses (run from people's homes or from other premises), especially those that take into account the family's socio-economic circumstances and essential needs;

(f) Action by regional and international funding institutions, working in coordination to prevent overlapping and duplication, to provide support for the implementation of projects and delivery of programmes contemplated in the Strategy, with a view to the advancement of the Arab family;

(g) Affirmation of the importance of establishing and setting in operation the World Solidarity Fund, the establishment of which was proposed at Tunis and subsequently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, deeming that the Fund would be able to provide the resources needed to improve the living conditions of the neediest Arab families.

Institutional arrangements for following up the implementation of projects under the Strategy and evaluating their outcomes

1. Coordination among regional and international programmes and activities organized by the LAS Secretariat's Directorate for the Family, Women and Children, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), United Nations offices and agencies, and the Arab Family Organization;

2. Provision of the necessary financial and administrative support for the LAS Secretariat's Directorate for the Family, Women and Children, to enable it to

perform its functions and cooperate with specialized national agencies and Arab, regional and international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental;

3. Support for cooperation between national and Arab scientific research institutions and centres that conduct family-related studies on the one hand and Arab and international organizations on the other for the purpose of gathering data and statistics relating to families, in accordance with criteria and classifications that take into account widely disparate family types and their several environments, and for the purpose of conducting field research and surveys on the situation of the Arab family and how it is being affected by contemporary changes;

4. Support for research and training mechanisms within Arab and international organizations, deeming them to be being well placed to follow up and monitor the extent of progress achieved in implementing the content of the Strategy;

5. Development of the institutional structure of national community associations and mobilization of their capacities and resources, and strengthening solidarity and coordination among them in cooperation with relevant Arab and international organizations;

6. Establishment or development of official national agencies and mechanisms concerned with family issues, with direct links to the highest executive authority in each State, and the allocation of adequate budget resources for them;

7. Establishment of an inter-Arab network of official national agencies and mechanisms concerned with family issues for the purpose of promoting cooperation and exchanges of expertise among them and coordination of their efforts, and for the purpose of promoting coordination between them and regional and international networks of governmental and non-governmental institutions concerned with family issues throughout the world.

General rules:

1. Member States shall take the necessary steps to implement the provisions of this Strategy in so far as their legislation, circumstances and capabilities permit.

2. Member States shall submit yearly reports to the LAS Secretariat's Directorate for the Family, Women and Children on measures they have taken to implement the objectives of this Strategy, noting their main achievements and problems, and DFWC in turn shall submit these reports to the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs at its annual meetings.

3. This Strategy shall come into force after it has been adopted in due form by the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs.